



S  
283  
Sh 81



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

**STATE LIBRARY**

HARRISBURG

the books the herre      es to pay 41.  
penle



A  
SHORT TREATISE  
IN SUPPORT OF  
*NATIONAL RELIGION:*

Containing a slight comparative Survey of the  
Roman Catholic and Protestant  
INSTITUTIONS;

CLEARLY SHEWING THE  
*SUPERIORITY of the LATTER.*

ALSO PARTICULARLY POINTING OUT THE  
GENERAL INJURY AND INFERIORITY  
OF ALL  
NON-CONFORMING SECTARIES.

THE WHOLE TENDING TO PRESERVE THE  
INTERNAL ORDER AND TRANQUILITY  
*OF A STATE.*

ADDRESSED to the CONSIDERATION of  
*Great Britain, Ireland, and  
Canada.*

Also to the present opportune Situation of the *French*,  
or any other People similarly circumstanced—as  
likewise to all Infant States whatever;

BY A GENTLEMAN  
OF THE  
*CHURCH OF ENGLAND.*

---

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. TINDAL, GREAT PORTLAND STREET.

1791.

S

283

5h 81

---

THE  
AUTHOR'S ADDRESS  
TO THE  
READER.

*Call 320.1*  
TO shew the smallest negligence to the honest opinion of the public, would be to betray an unpardonable weakness of general contempt for that which ought to stand high in the estimation of every man; therefore being utterly incapable of offering the appearance of slight, to a decree that is always no less seriously important than commonly just and equitable, the writer of this following Treatise, requests a particular attention to these preliminary references.

“That being neither personally, or by connections, neither in prospect or intention of the order of Clergy, and consequently prompted by no partial motives, he presents these disquisitions to the world, from a thorough conviction of their containing truths, that may possibly render service to some of those who may be at

the trouble of examining into their contents; and whether such, when attended with such consequences, may be natives of this or any other realm, it will afford an equal satisfaction, that will most amply requite and gratify the utmost wishes of the Author; who would most cheerfully, in all such general instances as the advancement of religion, consider himself more in the light of a Citizen of the World, and the whole human race thereof, collectively as his brethren, than in the confined narrow sphere of national partiality, ever repugnant to that truth and liberality of reasoning that is herewith strictly offered to the view: to the purpose, then, that there may not remain even a supposition that this principle is intentionally invaded throughout the whole of this discussion, it may be proper here to state, that though the general tendency of the arguments would equally apply to all governments whatever—the Non-conformists herein mentioned, comprize only those of this particular realm, who dissent from the established church of England; and to them in general, this observation may be accordingly due; that notwithstanding the fe-

verity



verity with which their tenets and dissent may seem to be treated, in order to throw the full glare of light on their much to-be-lamented abstracted voice and conduct, yet does the Author highly hold them in his own private opinion, as altogether a very considerable and most respectable body of men, whose religious sentiments are infinitely more those of a prejudiced education, (the consequences of which having been generally neglected) than those of their own deliberate choice, formed upon thorough and mature self-investigation.

To the Roman Catholics, likewise, a similar explanation may also seem necessary; that as men are by nature born in the closest alliance of propensities, of whatever religion they may be, the author is equally sensible, that in the body of Roman Catholics, there are multitudes who would be both an honour and ornament to any, the most enlightened and liberal of nations; but lest any of this order should take unreasonable umbrage, beyond the intent of this work, it is here first declared, that the leading tendency of the following discussion, as far as it affects them, is directly and generally

to

to point out in striking colours, that in the choice of their religious tenets and opinions, beyond a doubt they are not personally wise to themselves; and such is the confidence that the Author evidently places in their general candour, so perfectly demonstrative of his good opinion, that he ventures to submit to their view such free arguments as must necessarily lay claim to this exertion of their liberal perception; and however forcibly the light and shade of the painting upon the surface may raise the indignant passions, a particular reference to this faithful explanation will sufficiently counteract every degree of temporary disgust, and thereby promote the great object of the authors determined intent of contributing his endeavour to serve all indiscriminately, without exception, either to a difference of religion, or to the different interests of all the different countries, nations, and kingdoms of the world.

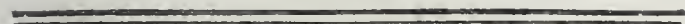
In order, however, to prevent either suspicions or suppositions that might in the smallest degree be injurious to any individual person; it may further be necessary to declare, that the

Author

Author has not been prompted, either directly or indirectly, neither by the advice, desire, will, or even the knowledge of any clerical ministerial party, or personal influence or assistance whatever, either to write or make public the contents of the following sheets; and therefore it is but justice due to all, freely to acknowledge that every error and defect they may contain centers wholly in himself; and whatever such may be, whether inaccuracies of explanation, or impropriety of style, as it is not the Author's profession, in custom or province, to be a public writer, he firmly looks up to the generous judgment of the discerning, for that full latitude of excuse (in this instance so requisite) which ever distinguishes the liberality of superior and general education, from the littleness of mind that so perceptibly attends the cynical severity of high-strained criticism; and in this expectation, the Author confidently throws himself upon the generosity of the public, in the full assurance that the justness of the cause, will so far plead his own, as completely to do away every imputation of blame.

A SHORT

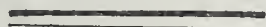




A

## SHORT TREATISE

IN SUPPORT OF

*NATIONAL RELIGION.*

ALL nations and tribes of people throughout the whole of this habitable globe of earth, however barbarous and uncivilized, have either on particular occasions (such as the burial of their dead, or the like) some superstitious formal ceremonies, denotive of a perceptible reference to futurity; or have some peculiar direct mode of religious worship; which whether devoted to the sun, moon, or stars; whether to idols, to Mahomet, or otherwise; all equally tend to declare an universal inward sense implanted in the mind of man by nature, of an Almighty Power that guides and rules the fate of the universe, whose attribute is adoration.

B

Each

Each of these forms, though in different degrees, according to the proportionate state of civilization of the different countries wherein they are practised, all lead to the same great and noble end; that of counteracting vice, promoting peace and virtue, and manifesting to the whole world, the Glory of an Omnipotent Creator.

To consider religion however as totally unconnected with, and abstracted from, the existing laws and political state of a nation, would be at once to betray reasoning too weak and absurd, to be now found supported even by the most ignorant or heated zealot, in these enlightened parts of an enlightened age: for nothing can be more evident than that the force of the most enthusiastic religion alone, will neither preserve an individual in the unmolested enjoyment of his property, or maintain the general peace of society; neither will the law effect either of these purposes, without the aid of a connected religion; and therefore it is, that each nation has or ought to have an established church; the one being equally necessary to the other, as well for furthering the will of God, as for protecting the works of man.

The



The arguments indeed in favour of a settled permanent national establishment, must appear clear to demonstration, upon a very slight survey of the benefits arising therefrom :

In the first place—the articles and tenets of an established church, are or should be so constructed, as neither to confound, perplex or counteract directly, nor tend to counteract indirectly, the established laws; but on the contrary should more or less enforce their obedience.

Secondly—a fixed religion thus founded by the government of a country, (in which is always to be found the first rate abilities, not seperately but collectively conjoined and administered) is generally if not always found upon investigation, to be better adapted to the then times and circumstances, infinitely more beneficial to the community, and consequently more acceptable to the Supreme Being, than the doctrines of particular men vainly bigotted to some little narrow-minded opinions of their own; or who for their private interested purpose and advantage, entirely thoughtless and equally careless of the injury they are doing,

hold forth principles of nonconformity, in general founded upon the meereft vague enthusiastic chimerical ground, that can well enter into the brain of man; but nevertheless fo artfully twifted and drefsed up, as to be plaufibly enough calculated to prey upon weak minds for the emolument of their defigning leaders.

Thirdly—that an eftablifhed church well fupported, combines a people under one head; reduces them to one fociety with fimilar views and fimilar interefts; thereby harmonizing the whole, and rendering them infinitely more refpectable with neighbouring, and more powerful againft rival kingdoms; by this means producing an influx of advantage, univerfally defirable to every community.

It is not however here meant to be inferred, that the articles of a church once eftablifhed, are for ever to remain unaltered; but that whatever alteration may be requifite, fhould be made entirely by the authority of government, and by no means fuffered to be introduced at random, by individuals whose forefight is feldom capable of taking in the whole even of immediate objects, much lefs fo of extending to diftant  
 confiderations



considerations frequently no less material in their consequences.

Every century differs in some degree from the foregoing, either by the decrease or increase of knowledge in letters, arts, and sciences; when these become flourishing, the minds of men constantly expand to that degree, that they look with a sort of amazement on the past periods of obscurity, and naturally hold in contempt the errors and superstition of those ignorant times; and though religion has the scripture (the most solid of all foundations) for its basis, yet it is beyond a doubt that the forms, ceremonies and paraphernalia, as well as several of the tenets, must be tempered and suited to the existing age.

When this is neglected, it is the immediate and direct source of non-conforming sectaries, division, and discord; a conduct in any government so highly impolitic and injurious, as to mark great want of attention to the public welfare; unless proceeding from the common prevalent opinion, that such changes would weaken the general cause of that particular religion it was intended to support; an opinion however entirely founded on error; general toleration  
being

being infinitely more calculated to impress the mind with an apparent superficiality productive of indifference, than a prudent, cautious, sparing reform : and that such an apprehension would be absolutely futile, will be further perceived by adverting to what has been already observed, that religion naturally maintains its ascendancy over the mind of man, and when the establishment is neither untimely, preposterous, or working against reason, it is always sure to be held in due reverence, and to meet with every requisite and necessary support.

But certain it is, that in an established church, there should be neither doctrines or forms that the most enlightened understanding could substantially object to ; which must as certainly be the case, unless it continually receives just so much of the polish of the times, as to preserve the essence and spirit of the original in complete purity : where the ground work is good, that should be held inviolate. Neither is every tenet, form, or ceremony that may at first sight appear strange and unaccountable, therefore to be rejected or new modelled, as they sometimes  
carry

carry with them hidden and distant effects beneficial to particular classes of people; and religion not being calculated for the superior order only, these seeming inaccuracies will never be attacked but by men of the weakest judgment, who cannot see far enough into nature to perceive their benefits.

The only principal grand existing rival establishments, seem to be that of the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches.—Of the former, it may be observed to have originated in a magnificent extended idea of creating a Holy Supreme on earth, to represent and fulfil the ordinances of the Almighty Supreme of the universe; thus confining the light of Heaven to one center, from thence to diverge its benign rays to every the most distant quarter of the known world—but however noble great and brilliant this foundation may seem, it is by far too unbounded in its object, to dispense the absolute requisite benefits of religion to mankind in general: for the power of mortals being circumscribed and limited comparatively to a narrow compass, these rays of light must naturally become weaker and weaker, as the distance from this center is multiplied, until every re-

mote quarter must necessarily be enveloped in total darkness, ignorance and barbarism:—can any thing be more clear therefore, than that the very ground work on which this mighty fabric is raised, is highly defective, if not ultimately injurious?

This original however, is plainly the offspring of a bold ambitious mind, that would aggrandize attach and draw to itself, the power riches and splendour of the whole globe; that would raise, comparatively, poor weak insignificant mortal man, as it were even to immortality bordering upon profanation.—Blind and abject submission to such mighty power, that takes upon itself to absolve mankind from their sins, naturally becomes the essence of its doctrines; on which account it seems judiciously enough calculated for, and therefore adopted by absolute monarchies; where the interest of such states and the interest of his Holiness, are united in support of their mutual advantage.

How far the particular dispositions of some kingdoms, (whether from timely or prevailing ignorance, from a turbulent obstinacy produced by that ignorance, from any natural levity, or  
either

either of these proceeding from situation or climate, or from an over-extended dominion) may require the determined hand of absolute monarchy to rule and direct it to advantage, may be worthy of some consideration.—Under such circumstances however, the Roman Catholic church may occasionally by the means of its more than ordinary pomp and superstitious awe, work the effect of peace, good order, and morality, where the more enlightened doctrines of the Protestant church might fail in its impression, on minds either too rude to be easily affected, or too light to weigh and retain the unadorned plain truths of a more divine and liberal precept.

However, in these few observations it must be understood, that there is more of excuse, than recommendation of popery; for the narrow policy of endeavouring to intrench and force their opinions upon the whole world, by denouncing heretical enmity against every other establishment, must of course in return, be deservedly reprobated by any mind not intoxicated with their enthusiasm, as a poor unprincipled attempt to supplant every disaccord-



ing judgment; not by lenient convincing argument, but by vindictively imposing on the pliant age of youth, tenets horribly prejudicial to every institution but their own; and although this prejudice must gradually lessen, even to a shadow, as the age becomes enlightened, nevertheless doth it stand forth a glaring instance of the crafty immoral tendency of the Roman Catholic religion; vainly, arrogantly (but absurdly and detestably) striving to bear down all opposition by such buffonery of propagation.

Indeed to sum up its imperfections in few words, it can exist in full force only when clothed in the full glare of solemn pomp, when marked with much of artificial borrowed outward sanctity, when nursed by enthusiastic superstition, when fed by a complete drain of the vital resource of a nation, when cherished by the blind ignorance or thoughtless levity of the people, and when maintained and supported by a combination of the exacted wealth and overbearing power of a numerous and formidable body of priesthood.

With such the truly promenant requisities of this high holy church, well may it seem  
strange

strange at first sight to every disinterested and unbiaſſed obſerver, that the Roman Catholic eſtabliſhment ſhould prevail in any conſequential degree, in thoſe parts of the globe where arts and literature have once eſtabliſhed themſelves.

But the prejudicial and ruinous effect that the expoſure of theſe enormities naturally carries with it, has been wiſely foreſeen, cautiously guarded againſt, and endeavoured to be counteracted in the actual formation of the ſyſtem; by which means it ſtill continues to ſhine forth one of the two principal extant models of devotion; to account for this however more particularly, the following conſiderations muſt be held up to view:

Fiſt.—The force of ancient cuſtom, prevailing habit, and the powerful impreſſion of the early imbibed prejudice of youth.

Secondly.—The crafty ſyſtem of principles formed in ſubtile foreſight, purpoſely to take advantage of the weakneſs of human nature, by drawing forth the protection of the rich and powerful, whoſe cauſe and intereſt it highly ſtrengthens at the expence of the general mul-

titude, whose ignorance and poverty can be of no service, and are therefore entailed upon them as a further fund of security to this otherwise insecure religion.

Thirdly.—Its aptitude on this and other accounts for absolute monarchy, on the same principle attaching even princes as well as subjects.

Fourthly. That in the minutie it no doubt inculcates virtue in general, produces good order, and (excepting on occasions where the intriguing and perverted spirit of the Holy Fathers feel their interest touched,) promotes the desirable blessing of peace and harmony.

Fifthly and Lastly.—That it also as certainly leads the soul and body (when duly observed) to present and future happiness, the great and glorious end of all religion whatever.—From these causes, it has been handed down from times of ignorance to the present period of more liberal knowledge; and still continues in spite of the many palpable defects and absurdities to be revered and idolized by many millions of people, who receive it insensibly as custom has transmitted it to them, with all

its



its imperfections staring them in the face, without bestowing one determined thought, either upon its evil or beneficial tendency, as to its political worldly consequences; they perceive a moral good to arise from it, which to them is a sufficient reason to pursue the footsteps of their ancestors, regardless of these earthly, but highly important and necessary considerations, which however it is acknowledged may be beyond the sphere of general comprehension, and totally against the interest of their superiors to point out.

But certain it undoubtedly is, that the Roman Catholic religion has lost much, very much of its over-strained power, and has declined exactly in proportion to the improvement of each particular country wherein it is followed; neither is it absolutely improbable but that it may continue to do so, until ultimately the papal throne of magnificent sumptuous ambition, becomes the ridiculous mockery of its former devotees; superstition, craft and bigotry, will assuredly be found out-weighed by conviction; mankind as their eyes open will by degrees feel out their mysterious benefits, and  
these

these long used delusive religious errors will gradually abate, and at length evaporate and disperse, like foul stagnated air by the salubrious breeze; leaving in its place an azure serenity, through which to view with ease pleasure and admiration, the glorious works and ordinances of an all-seeing, all-wise and all-powerful Creator.

Having now slightly surveyed the Roman Catholic foundation, as to its inaptitude to dispense the beneficial blessing of present immediate advantage in true and just measure from the highest to the lowest, (which should always be, though a secondary, yet a very principal object to be aimed at in every religion) and having shewn that the original intent of spreading and extending it as the universal religion of the globe, is as vain and nugatory as it would be highly prejudicial, by distance from the seat of government to much the greater part of its inhabitants; and as it is intended in the course the succeeding discussion, to consider the political injuries attending it, both by the despotic sway and controul it maintains over its vassal nations, as well as the constant drain of their wealth (an  
effectual

effectual bar to industry) necessary to its pomp, aggrandizement, and even to its existence; it is now time to proceed to a comparison of the next principal extant order of religion.

The Protestant establishment according to the church of England.

Here then (positively divested of all narrow degrading prejudice) the field seems amply to open to general perception in every direction, presenting to view a model infinitely more consonant with the divine will of the immortal Judge, in as much as it is more conformable to strict justice and right reason, better calculated to preserve to every defenceless individual the natural in-born rights of man; at the same time that it takes not ought from authority, but when properly enforced, happily tends to blend and combine the whole in uniform virtuous fraternity; a model approaching much nearer to perfection, comprehending that noble compound of moral and civil good, never to be derived but through a well formed basis, grounded on principles of reciprocal liberality and enlightened wisdom, strictly according with the divine precepts of Scripture.

In

In order however to establish this assertion, it will be expedient to reduce the proofs to these three leading heads :

First—as to the obvious religious benefits of futurity to which it effectually conduces.

Next—the present immediate benefits of this life to the universality of mankind alike in every quarter of the globe where followed.

And Lastly—the solid advantage and assistance it affords to every government whatever that adopts it.

The first of these will be easily ascertained by comparing the actual instruction held forth to the people, by these two different orders of religion.

The Roman Catholic prayers and public service has been usually written and delivered in the Latin tongue, a dead language not completely understood by four-fifths, nay it may be said by nine-tenths of these infatuated people; for what other can they be called who kneel at a shrine, where darkness all to them prevails instead of light, where all is mystery above their comprehension, where they are taught to use words without knowing the substance, where  
they

they hear but do not understand, and where they see yet perceive not the more than ordinary motives for these intentional obscurities.

The grand aim of all which is, secretly to keep the people in ignorance and the priesthood enlightened.

To this effect, there is held forth an outward seeming commendable encouragement of learning (much too commonly supposed to center entirely in an intimate knowledge of the Latin, a dead language;) but in fact under this specious disguise, the priesthood artfully retain the staff of blind superiority in their own hands, thereby creating themselves bright luminaries to shine with greater splendour, in proportion to the general darkness of the veil they cast upon the multitude; who thus throwing themselves of necessity, upon the conspicuous and apparently disinterested sagacity of their father confessors, are the more easily led to the full purposes of those whom they implicitly believe to be wise and holy men; and these their purposes, are evidently to work all by the attractive pleasant delusion of high and solemn pomp, impressing strongly upon the mind reverential awe, pro-

D

ductive



ductive of that rooted favourable superstition and bigoted zeal, into which their congregations are entrapped, even as it were by a magical charm, without, generally speaking, knowing why or wherefore: hearing orations, of which they only know the general purport, in an unintelligible language, made by these reverend men, surrounded with all their sumptuous paraphernalia, serves as well to raise the ideas of the people to idolism amounting to idiotism, as it serves at the same time to extol and magnify their holinesses in their eyes, to the exalted state of so many Demi Gods.

Can any fact be more strikingly ridiculous, than that of a sensible man receiving the absolution of his sins from one of these, who when stripped of his habit of wisdom, and nakedly exposed, is perhaps his inferior in understanding, his inferior in strength, his inferior in virtue, his inferior in godliness, and his inferior in every qualification and accomplishment that adorns human nature? egregious folly! too barefaced to pass without the most marked and highly-merited censure.

Where

Where then is the instruction conveyed by this mighty boasted religion? Where the acceptable offering to Almighty God of the heart devoted to his will through an intimate knowledge of his fatherly love and merciful kindness? and where is the full proof obvious to the senses, that strikes home to the feelings of nature, and bears down all opposition? Alas! in lieu of this forcible conviction, the Roman Catholic rites substitute magnificent shew, gaudy attractions, specious delusion, solemn ceremony, and mysterious worship; rather beguiling their flock into morality, than laudably teaching and enstilling into their minds, the virtuous doctrines of the duties of life and god-like devotion; whereby their devotees become in a manner deprived of the solid intrinsic merit of acting from themselves upon rational motives, but are in a manner negatively drawn to virtue, upon a ground neither by any means so clear nor so meritorious, and therefore of course in a less degree entitled to the promised glorious reward of futurity; the reward of benevolence, fortitude, abstinence, and moral rectitude, proceeding from the immediate fountain of an innate principle and greatness of soul.

Now survey the Protestant practice as to the point in question—this embraces the same object by means totally different from the former.

It will no doubt universally be allowed, that in all public worship, there should be a strict attention to majestic form and the most reverential decent demeanour, neither should there be wanting the innocent agreeable attractions of solemn hymn, psalm, or sacred chaunt, more or less refined according to the taste of the auditors; which all combined promotes a proper attention, and tends in a moderate degree to inspire the mind with a sublime fervency suitable to the high occasion.

Thus far and no farther is enjoined and enforced as the usage of the Protestant church, in as full ample and finished a manner as can possibly be required by any reasonable mortal; yet at the same time wisely drawing the line, so as to exclude the pernicious taint of superstition, and leaving the understanding perfectly free to judge calmly and collectedly of the Divine Oracles about to be explained.—Under these mild observances, the congregation offer up to Almighty God a form of prayer, so thoughtfully  
calculated



calculated as to contain the wants, necessities and uniform desires of every individual of them, and this not only in their native language but in a composition and style strongly impressive, and strikingly sublime—After which there is delivered an explanation of the parables dictates and intricacies of the Scripture by men of moderation, limited, bound, and constrained, not to mislead the attentive ear, but to instruct and perfect the multitude in all heavenly and earthly maxims of wisdom, that may every way conduce to their present happiness in tranquil pleasurable peace, harmony, and enjoyment, as well as most effectually lead their souls, by due observation, to the great indivineable glorious state of future bliss, the first and grand object of all religion.

Here is neither to be found guile or delusion, all fair, open, candid and liberal; every syllable understood, every line open to the discussion of a free unbiassed judgment, and every sentence forcing itself naturally and rationally upon the intellectual faculties, carrying unanswerable, rooted and heavenly conviction to the mind.

The

The head of discussion next in course is, "The present immediate benefits of this life that must inevitably accrue to mankind in general, by an adoption of the Protestant religion in any quarter of the globe whatever."

Comparison has been chosen as the clearest method to point out these advantages in their merited lustre; good and ill being in themselves relative and comparative, from which cause the repetition of a foregoing observation becomes rather necessary and applicable—"That the papal throne in its origin, aimed at no less than the direction of religion in every kingdom, nation, and country throughout the world."

How vain the attempt must so forcibly strike every reader as to require but little comment; it cannot but be evident that the power of all government and bodies of men is confined to space, and his holiness the Pope allowing no competitor, of course fixes one only seat of direction, filled by himself, and therefore is this religion in its nature circumscribed to those kingdoms only adjacent to that central spot, and not calculated for the generality of the world; for it is well known at the extremities of large empires singly, in those parts remote from the source of power,  
that

that the administration even of common laws and justice is for the most part comparatively weak, by how much more so must not the cause of this religion suffer, when it includes under its authority several empires, the extent of one of which alone would be perhaps sufficiently difficult to guide to virtue and regularity, from the issue of such single seat of direction ; but once extended beyond these its spherical limits, it becomes ineffective, and counting space, nine parts in ten of the globe must materially suffer, was it possible to propagate it universally ; for priests, like other men, fail in duty just as their responsibility is distant, and act accordingly from themselves and for themselves.

It is true this church may convey the immediate present benefits of peace and order to mankind within its immediate circle ; but how does it effect this ? not by opening the eyes of the people generally to their own interest, but through the means retained of contenting the rich and opulent (who can at pleasure purchase absolution, the artful seal of sacerdotal strength, for words, acts and deeds of atrocity, however unjust or impious, through the never failing  
medium

medium of their all alluring gold) and by an influence exerted in supporting these superiors in the full flow of their authority over the numerous multitude, who are first weakened and rendered harmless by poverty, and then their spirit destroyed, they are easily humbled to submit without resistance to the galling yoke, however arbitrary or tyrannous.

Thus, allowing no middle state of consequence, does it enforce the benefit of peace and order to their districts, if benefit it can be called when effected by such ignoble means.

How unlike to this is the Protestant church when traced on the same score?

Here is a regular, orderly body of clergy, as elegant in literature, as accomplished in manners, as profound in science to the full as the former; endowed with ample power of dispensing to the community of their several appointments these salutary advantages, by a full display of learning and information calculated to instruct and edify, but so composed as to be generally understood, and to accord with the capacities of their hearers; improving and fitting them to become useful members of society.—

This

This is enjoined in the duty of clergymen and required at their hands; beyond which the establishment is rendered wholly inoffensive and incapable when duly attended to, of the smallest general injury — the wise union of church and state most happily effects the great purpose of moderating their power, which was the former to be set above the latter, as in the Catholic order, would instantly be done away, and at once deprive this charming structure of its principal and essential ornament; for too true it is, and such is Nature's misfortune, that without some controul, man left to himself will always deviate more or less from the rule of right and prey upon the privileges of others.

Thus with godliness, is at the same time established, both the improvement of the mind and order in the conduct of the general mass of people, and thus is it effected without the least ill consequence to derogate ought from the merit of this institution.

However to complete the system, the excellent authority, the finishing hand of example, has been well affixed, in order to preserve a beneficial regularity in the manners, life, deli-



very and doctrines of the clergy, by the prudent creation of bishops, to act in dioceses of such bounds only that all enormities may fall under their observance, and of such sufficient number as the extent of kingdom makes necessary to comprize and compress the whole in conspicuous regular uniformity.

This creation is likewise doubly serviceable; for the privilege of this appointment not centering in the clergy, but in a branch of the legislature, deriving no possible advantage from any impurity or illegal stretch of their prerogative, and being chosen from and conferred upon those of the order who eminently shine forth superior in virtue, in talents, in accomplishments, and in all the requisite abilities; it becomes at once an object of emulation stimulative of the noblest purposes, and every way advantageous both to them and the public.

From this creation too proceeds in a great measure the pointed aptitude of the Protestant religion, wherever adopted, to confer and dispense the like benefits with an equal good effect, throughout the whole or any part of the globe whatsoever—for it is evident that this division  
of

of any country into certain convenient spaces called dioceses, feperately fuperintended by bifhops thus appointed, is alike every where calculated to produce the fame proportionate degree of morality and order, when combined with an ecclefiaftical court of principle, formed in due fympathy with native laws.

That the rude or enlightened ftate of a people may affect the pofitive, but not at all the relative degree, is doubtlefs; the sentiments, the difcourfe, the language of a native, will at all times and in all places fuit and befit the native capacity, whether ignorant or refined, and therefore propagate as much of good to either, as the common underftanding is capable of receiving or retaining; whereas fpeaking to the rude, (as an emiffary of the court of Rome) in the language of the refined or fpeaking to the enlightened in the language of the ignorant, the intent is deftroyed, and the efficacy at once loft in a labyrinth of confufion, perplexity or derifion—not but that the paftors fhould be every where men of fuch fuperior learning and intellects, as to give improvement to their flock, at the fame time that the degree of it will na-

turally be confined, as it is also better suited to the different state of improvement of each particular country; wherefore however uncivilized or barbarous, or however brilliant in refinement, the Protestant religion is clearly adapted for either.

Further consider that this church is guarded, protected, and in some measure regulated by the particular legislature of any particular country or kingdom, solely and wholly independant of any foreign power, interestedly to interfere or jealously to interrupt a reigning harmony; also that by the internal regulation of its spiritual court, which should always bear an analogy to the code of established laws, it becomes directly completed either for monarchial, aristocratical, democratical, or a blended government of what nature soever.

Thus in the wisdom of its foundation is it equally and generally formed for the common benefit of the whole collective race of man.

The last arguments that will be used to shew the superiority of the protestant over the Roman Catholic religion, will be now confined to the political benefits that must always accrue to

any



any and every kingdom that adopts the former.

According to the degree of unconfined knowledge spread and dispersed around by any particular mode of worship, so does the minds of the people emanate, and therewith take into view an enlarged sphere of political advantage, multiplying and keeping pace in exact proportion thereto; even as wisdom surpasses and rises superior to folly and ignorance.

By the exertion of industry in the lower class, of trade and commerce in the middle class, of order well maintained, and a life of good example in the higher class, it is that a nation becomes populous, respectable, rich and powerful.

On the contrary, the mind as it verges towards the ignorant state of nature, perceives the less these advantages and leans to all things in common, or in other words to theft, rapine, murder, adultery, incest, and the great train of human evils; wherefore the husbandman then employs not the labourer, neither does he till, uncertain of reaping to himself the produce; the manufacturer and mechanic produce neither elegancies or conveniences, uncer-

tain

tain of their reward ; the merchant requires not the navigator, not knowing whither to export or from whence to import ; and thus for a people to be ignorant is at one and the same time to be impotent.

That this consequent necessary enlargement of the understanding is effected in a very confined and partial degree by the Catholic church, has been already set forth, and therefore needs only this further comment : that it is not by instructing the superior, and already opulent class of a state (according to the custom of this religion) that a nation rises to power, but infinitely more from an attention to the other two inferior though consequential ranks, suitable to their several capacities, and such as may lead them insensibly to the general good.

Next to be considered is the great expence, necessary to support the usual pomp of this ambitious church in all its high magnificence, thereby directly weakening the resource of national contributions, as well as indirectly in its consequences, by taking from each individual too great a proportion of his hire, enervating the spirit of the people to lethargic indolence—

add

add to this the impolitic and absurd idea encouraged and promulgated, of leaving great wealth to their monastic institutions for the benefit of the idle, locking up, and rendering useless both the numbers, treasure and strength of a country.

Now advert to the abject submission required by the high and holy see of Rome, from every potentate however mighty, however superior in power, under the penalty of incurring the most horrible imprecations, (the scandal, the scorn of human nature) of incurring revengeful vengeance, darkly to be accomplished through the means of its several dependants, foolishly led in bondage to be blindly subservient to her own purposes—think of the artful political interested intrigues of a court so weakly founded in itself, how necessary and natural it is in all advice and interference, to make herself the first and the vassal only a secondary object, promoting war and enmity as best suits her own views; and it will be impossible not to own but that such assumed authority and sway over any kingdom by a foreign power, must be ultimately and generally prejudicial to the common interest,

more

more especially when into the account is taken the sum of money raised upon and extorted from the internal circulation; to be sent abroad for the aggrandizement of this lordly court.

Indeed it clearly appears that all these facts in the whole from first to last, are every way injurious to the happy and prosperous government of any kingdom or set of people upon the earth.

It may not however on some occasions be so to those kings, princes and rulers, who in a misguided path of innovation pursue their private happiness in giving a loose to wild inordinate passions, and who merely consulting their own head-strong will or pleasure, seek every self gratification, regardless of the spoils and oppression of their people: to these it is true, as well as to those who succeed to hereditary seats of arbitrary despotism, it may afford some assistance; indeed the peculiar grand characteristic of the Roman Catholic establishment, is, that it strongly favours the tyrant's sway over subjects whose pitiable cries for mercy are too distant to reach, draw to their protection, or affect the ear of the court of Rome; nevertheless not too distant

distant to receive annual emolument and compensatory adulation from the despot's authority : so are these powers politically bound together by one great chain, the bane to the natural privileges of man, that a single link of which broken, probably destroys the one and eventually weakens the other; and therefore the authority of this religion may on some occasions (though it is hoped they seldom exist) be exercised for interest sake to the most prejudicial, nay even iniquitous purposes.

In the further continuation of this comparative discussion, on the political advantages to all states derived from an adoption of the Protestant religion, the head of argument will be more immediately applied to that establishment only.

To say at once that it is directly the opposite of the Roman Catholic church, would be instantly comprising nearly every requisite recommendation; but in order to raise a tower of strength that will brave the rude storm and go hand in hand with time, it is necessary to proceed by regular gradations:

F

First



First look upon the Protestant order, as an institution founded to draw forth a people from gloomy darkness into dazzling light, opening by natural degrees their eyes, (that would be totally overpowered by too sudden a glare,) until time shall give them strength to behold the enchanting field of comprehensive knowledge laid open to their view: every individual benefitting justly and equally, according to the inborn gifts of their retentive faculties, until perfected in every social virtue, they become orderly members of the community, capable of comprehending the advantages arising from each separate pursuit in life, and of prospering thereby; and thus by the wise system and example, and by the enlightening doctrines of this church, are they endowed with reflecting powers and sufficient abilities to form for themselves a good and efficient government; and thus does the prosperity of the people strengthen that government and add importance to their native country.

This prosperity (the joint fruit of industry, agriculture, trade and commerce, pursued with vigour and ability) being directed by this well  
acquired



acquired knowledge of each particular branch; and free from the draw-backs of religious extortion; at the same time that it produces opulence, joins with it generally a high increase of population, forming thereby a more extended and ample ground for the necessary resources of a powerful government.

The safeguard of a nation when thus arrived at strength and opulence, is first, internal order and regularity without oppression; and next, the preserving itself so far unbiassed and so completely uncontrouled by the ambition or sordid interest of foreign power, that it may at all times be free to follow the dictates of right reason, so as neither to be led into error or menaced into injustice.

The first of these it is the peculiar blessing of the Protestant religion wisely to enjoin and mildly to enforce, by the very principle on which it is founded—that of a church in happy contact with the state, and not upon the ruinous principle of church above state.

The former principle carries with it the evidence of the senses so clearly, as to pronounce it decidedly preferable to the latter on every

ground of good policy; and in stating the particular instances, it will be needless to speak of both seperately, as whatever is advanced in favour of the one must of course disparage the other, and so vice versa.

By placing the church above the state then, is thrown an unlimited prodigious power into a very numerous body of people; and as such power so unconfined will ever be extended and prejudicially exerted, it follows, that in proportion to such their number, so will be the bane of their influence—it may perhaps be asked, why should not the wealth and consequence of a nation rest in the body of clergy as well as in other nobility or superiors? the answer is, that it may just as properly center in the military, in the faculty, in the body of merchants, or any other particular trade, each of which would be equally wrong; to forestall, engross and attach the good things of this life to any particular set of men, in any system of government, is highly partial, unprincipled and pernicious:—the door should certainly be left open for shining genius, for superior abilities in whatever line, for exemplary goodness, and for honest, able, successful industry;

industry; each should share as merit points them out:—from these even hereditary nobility will receive no contamination, for from these they should originally be formed; creating thereby an aspiring disposition and general emulation, productive of the best political services; but as in the present case, when a particular body of men are invested with divine legislative and regal authority together, they will so crush cramp and fetter a people to preserve that authority, that the consequent effect must ultimately dispirit and weaken the whole, lay them open to the in-roads of any invader, and at once devote them ready victims at the mercy of a conqueror.

This the Protestant establishment has wisely foreseen and guarded against accordingly, by thus happily blending church and state, that it may almost be said of the clergy as of the King of England: "They can do no wrong; at the same time that they are invested with full power to do every needful good"—with this proviso only, that supineness suffers them not to stray from their constitutional credence and forms, but that due attention be had to keep them

them one and all in the right regular appointed line ; then will a state assuredly feel the prosperous effects of improvement; in its increased regularity and internal order, through the means of the union and assistance of this inimitable institution.

Prosperity and internal harmony produced ; a further object of high political consequence presents itself in the adoption of this religion ; which is that of constituting in every such government, a self sufficiency, perfect compactness and solidity, unfettered with the ignominious clog of retarding doubt or destructive apprehension, that ever proceed from a continual dread of giving offence to a lordly master, (the court of Rome) but wholly free, as all states should be, to follow up every advantage that policy or chance may throw open to them; with that admired independency of spirit which constitutes the essence of all well-directed governments.

Next observe with what ease these political advantages are obtained ; moderation, the characteristic of the Protestant church, suffers not the votaries of her shrine to be burthened in any shape whatever, more than necessity makes needful ;

needful ; the foundation is happily calculated to relieve, not to oppress ; and therefore are the incumbent expences of its support as mild and equitable, as is consistent with the production of men capable of general instruction, in whom should be found superior knowledge and eloquent accomplishments, combined with a strict industrious attention and exemplarily regularity of conduct ; such being the requisite qualifications, so is there justly established in the clergy suitable seats of merit profit and honour worthy of them, as laudible in their object as beneficial in their consequences, affording that assistance to the general order of society, highly desirable, whether taken in a moral or political view.

In short, to conclude the whole of this comparative argument in favor of the Protestant church, little more seems further necessary than to remark, that every blessing, every benefit, every good end that can be proposed or expected from a religion of divine origin will ever be experienced, by adopting and adhering to the faith, doctrine, and propagation of this heavenly institution, replete with moral, universal, present, future, and political good to all mankind wheresoever.

But



But previous to a fixed determination on a point of such magnitude, it may be well to notice that in what has been set forth in the foregoing pages, there are no points of nice distinctions, no doubtful theory, no refinements or doublings of artful policy, but on the contrary whatever has been stated has for its basis, such broad, plain, and direct lines that must be visible and clear to every understanding, and accordingly bear with it ostensible unerring proof to every dispassionate reasoner.

Now first ye reverend holy men of the world, and next ye individuals of the universe in general, who have a greatness of soul that nobly dares to be impartial, lay your hands upon your hearts, and pronounce judgement on these two different orders of religion.

It is a narrow confined principle that would prompt a nation to preserve to itself a godly blessing, to which all mankind have a like and equal claim; from a strong sense of which it is that these preceding sheets have been written, free from the intent of injuring any man or class of men whatever who may differ in their religious opinions, but wholly and absolutely from



from a desire (if injury there may seem) of communicating and substituting a good, which would infinitely more than outweigh the imaginary evil—therefore to every Roman Catholic who may perchance be at the trouble of perusing them, an appeal to his candour and liberality becomes necessary; it may very probably in general be thought too much to expect, which notwithstanding it is but justice to require of him, to consider that it is not the man that is censured, but the errors only of a body of which it is true he is a member; but in this censure, however severe, he will easily perceive so much more of service to himself designed, that however difficult to throw off prejudice, he will surely make the effort, when though even his sentiments should not accord, he will at least acquit, if not approve the principle:

As to the priesthood, it may indeed seem exorbitant to expect either impartiality or the shadow of concurrence in thoughts that seem outwardly calculated to strike at the extirpation of their order; but even here the case is not so desperate as may appear to them at the first glance; for it is not by a single argumentative

appeal, that any sudden direct change can be wrought on the minds and customs of any particular people; it is only by slow gradations that men are brought to consider the prejudices of early education and continued habit, either as injurious or erroneous: all that can be said is, that remarks such as these may, to be sure, possibly assist in opening the eyes of a few, but they must be long continued, repeated, and aided by a number of concurrent circumstances and events (such as at present exist in France) to bring over a body of the Roman Catholic to the Protestant church; and should even this ever be the case, the priesthood will long before find the bent and inclinations of the people, and will if they act politically and wisely (as indeed they will be likewise naturally induced) reform and conform in opinion, form and doctrine, to the dictates of right reason and to the irresistible voice of the public: they will partake of the tinge of the times, and throw off by degrees their ancient superstition, and prepare themselves to meet the shock, not by ineffective impolitic struggle, but as men of brilliant learning, of enlightened and enlarged understandings, they will  
 comfort

comfort themselves with this reflection, that by such conduct, they will render themselves equally qualified to preach the gospel, though under different yet more permanent tenets, and thus by their superior capability, secure to themselves that emolument they would otherwise be sure to loose: so would it depend upon themselves whether by obstinately and disadvantageously continuing in the erroneous faith of a quick and speedy declining church, they would be levelled from their distinguished seats of dignified reverence, and thus sustain a loss—or whether by throwing off this mask of delusion, (no longer lucrative or serviceable) and listening to the voice of reason and justice, they would secede from their long-used incoherencies, and (what would be to them then more profitable) adopt at once a faith more liberal, and accordingly prepare themselves to teach doctrines founded upon generous principles, every way more beneficial to man and pleasing to the Almighty, and thus receive advantage by this appeal to their understandings.

To convulse a kingdom in perfect rest and peace upon any ground, is dangerous and de-

fructuive policy ; therefore are these observations upon the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches recommended to the particular attention of all infant states, as well as those of older establishment, that are now, or may at any time be under the ordeal of reform, of whichever or whatsoever religion they may be ; as if Catholic, it may assist in weakening a bad ; if Protestant, in strengthening, or if neither, in establishing a good cause.

It is presumed that to introduce these or such sentiments to the consideration of the French, at the present favourable crisis, at the same time that it would be benefiting them, would be doing neither present or future injury to Great Britain, but might probably tend to lessen in some measure the hitherto strong natural enmity of the two nations.

To Ireland too, they may be equally serviceable ; for the worst of all policy is there adopted, by the encouragement of both religions, even to the most ill-judged dangerous equality, which were it not poised by the superior power of England, would sooner or later be productive of consequences wofully fatal to the peace and welfare

welfare of that country; therefore let every man who has the interest of Ireland sincerely at heart, (as well the trading and commercial as the landed property) effectually assist in forming leading societies throughout every part of that kingdom, for the immediate purpose of promoting the Protestant religion; and in so doing, he will assuredly be insuring to himself more essential service than he may most probably be aware of; at the same time that he will be contributing by the mildest and most efficient means, to dispel the present rude ignorance and boisterous state of the commonality of the people.

It is undoubtedly perfectly natural for all men to seek and receive pleasure in the prosperity of their native country, and from this laudable cause proceeds the equal propensity, to maintain its positive independancy free and inviolate from the encroachments of every other power; but (as there are no rules without some exceptions) when this independency ceases to effect the wished for prosperity, or more particularly when it proves the bane to it, the mind of a true patriot will rise superior to a then mistaken and prejudicial zeal, and prefer  
 whatever



whatever dependence shall carry with it the successful blessing of his fellow-countrymen—  
Just such is Ireland to England.

Situated, protected and attached thereto, as Ireland ever must be, it becomes evident that her complete improvement in order and agriculture, her full prosperity in trade and commerce, in short her general advantage can never in the nature of things arrive at that much coveted state of perfection, which every Irishman feels within him a powerful impulse to promote, until they can refine their policy to a sufficient knowledge of their own interest, so as to throw off this very natural prejudice of independency, and honourably subject themselves in happy union to one religion, one head, one law, and one government with Great Britain; than which there exists not under Heaven, that which more mildly, more justly, and more effectually contributes to the general benefits of mankind.

But now again, to return to the cause of religion.

There is one grand fundamental maxim most essentially necessary to the preservation and well being of any order of religion whatever,

not



not proceeding wholly from its own partial consideration; but equally serving all in general for whom the institution is founded, and without which rule it can absolutely never produce the complete salutary wished for effect in full force: It is that of confining the form of worship, to one and only one plain consistent ceremony and model, profoundly considered and authorized by government of each particular country.

Here indeed the Roman Catholics have the advantage, without which, that order could never have existed at this hour; the life and soul of that establishment has consisted in being so warily and politically bound, as mostly to draw together, in one regular appointed line, that union, the entwining sinew of power, might guard and save the grand body from the bold or distant attempt of harm; and behold it has thus far wonderfully succeeded, even to a miracle; but so forcibly does this system strike against Reason, that how much longer it will be before some of the thin-worn links give way, it remains only for time to prove.

In this particular instance, the Protestant church would seem apparantly defective; yet it

is positively not the defect of the establishment, but an error and blemish in the administration of it only; which may very aptly be compared to the suffering a noble luxuriant tree to branch out into numerous extended boughs, that upon any sudden blast of wind overpower the stem, and rend the most valuable part in funder, therewith ruining both body and limb in one common havoc.

The first outset of any public incorporated society, religious or not, like that of a single individual person, promises good or ill, as it is guarded by prudence and foresight; wherefore any country first adopting the Protestant religion, should pay the utmost persevering attention, firmly to fix one right ground-line of form, not to be broken in upon by the preaching of fools, madmen, impostors, enthusiasts, weak imaginations, the thoughtless, the vain, the interested, the disappointed, or the bigots to some narrow little plausible opinions of their own conceit; but if any man has ground of substantial solid good to promulgate, let him instantly repair to the fountain head, and there make his offering to the legislature; for evidently certain  
it

it must be, that such attention to this unerring rule would return double fold gain to a thus prudent people, according to the strictness with which it might be observed.

This it is true is but an assertion, and may appear strange to many, from the difference of present practice, and the modern sentiments of general toleration (of inexperienced approbation) lately held forth in Great Britain; but notwithstanding that it is so, it has nevertheless broad truth for its foundation.

Indeed it is not to be wondered at, that universal indiscriminate toleration, the rage, the voice of the times, founded as it is upon the plausible catch word, liberality of sentiment, has so many thoughtless advocates; it is a magical doctrine that has the effect of a complete charm; to suffer mankind to act from their religious opinions as their fancy, their whim, their caprice, their enthusiasm, their prejudices, or their misguided inclinations may direct, free from the restraining hand of judgment, must be to be sure matchless policy and consummate wisdom; then to sanction by authority these heterogeneous opinions, the offspring of their various imagina-

II

tions,

tions, and to accustom individuals of every denomination to support to their utmost, all such their miserable conceits; (for in religion men will ever support what they publicly profess, even with their lives and fortunes) these are all pleasant delusions not easily to be resisted; and therefore is toleration a principle, that is gaining fast upon the present generation, who not experiencing the ill effect that will hereafter be produced by it, rush on with misplaced confidence and embrace that, which when confirmed and rooted, would occasion desolation and destruction to our posterity; for it is to succeeding generations, educated in and supporting this motley variety, that must be looked to for consequences fraught with woe, ere the mind of man can be again brought back to its necessary beneficial confinement, upon the dear-bought discovery and final proof of this reigning fallacious levity, and pernicious liberty of unrestrained toleration.

It is further the direct certain method whereby to bring religion into perfect contempt: people of the same country, nay people of every parish or village, one and all ridiculing the  
 absurd

absurd tenets and faith of their neighbours (for they will then assuredly become ridiculous) must evidently occasion an insurmountable and most fatal indifference towards all religion, productive of obscenity and immorality, ruinous and totally subversive of every social good; the farcical practices then continually acting before their eyes, would immediately convince the community of the trifling estimation in which religion would be so publicly held, that all forms and doctrines, however contrary, (the one most likely directly contradicting the other) being authorised as all equally right, must naturally therefore carry this reflection, that they may be all equally wrong, and thence create an indifference and contempt, shocking to the consideration of humanity.

That this dreaded consequence is not artificial, is sufficiently manifest; for it is a certain fact, that men of craft and men of loquacity, though of very imperfect political judgment, can by degrees make numerous converts of the unthinking, to any the most absurd and opposite tenets; (thus are the croud even now led to many of the dissenting, and particularly to the metho-



diffical meetings,) for they, when unrestrained, will ever follow a particular attachment to the delivery of particular men, and are ever ready to believe when pleased by the discourse of those who call forth their attention by any extraordinary exertion or new device; and consequently would succeeding generations upon this tolerating plan, be enveloped in a labyrinth of almost irredeemable confusion and religious anarchy; for it is again and again repeated, that in religion there are no absurdities, even of the most gross, bare-faced and injurious nature, that a people may not imbibe by education, so strongly as to maintain at every hazard by the sword, and deliver down with poisonous education to their children, and childrens' children; and therewith stamp and seal the world with unblushing error, the immediate source, the high road to the return of that ignorance and barbarity, from which these parts of Europe are now so happily emerged.

How infinitely preferable, nay how absolutely necessary therefore is it, to preserve and hand down to our successors, an enlightened liberal model of devotion, founded upon well-experienced



rienced judgment, and fixed upon settled determined principles, according as completely with the scriptures and the constitution of the kingdom, as with the benefits and privileges of every individual native inhabitant thereof; such, and such only, should undoubtedly be ordonanced and enforced as the general education of the rising generation; for however trifling and insignificant the dissenting opinions of even a few may seem, they have incontrovertibly, when authorised, a gradual detrimental effect and baneful influence, certain as the grave.

Allowing mongrels to mix with a chosen perfect collection of any species, for the sake of answering some immediate limited purpose, may be seemingly inoffensive and harmless; but the future consequence is that of dispensing ill qualities, and in the end completely destroying the antecedant beautiful admired symmetry of feature and action in the originals: just so by men of different persuasions in religion, contrary to that of an established church, when too much encouraged upon an erroneous supposed principle of liberality and reciprocity, for the immediate design of a small increase of population,

tion, together with the small addition of wealth thereby attached or brought with them—the first natural effect they cause, is the production of doubts in the minds of their particular circles; and the next that of making proselytes of the weak and thoughtless, of which perhaps the greater number are composed, who are soon deluded, and fall an easy prey to the artful discourses they then become exposed to, which, in such instances are generally calculated by gesture, grimace, words and thoughts, to draw forth and beguile the attention, or otherwise by the craft of some plausible principle, they thus work their cause upon the easy belief, and by this means attach their unwary followers; until increasing in numbers and multiplying in sects, they, united, become an object of serious alarm to the mother church.

Thus may each and every individual resident member of any dissentient sect whatever, ultimately prove a bane to the land they dwell in; although they would previously undoubtedly shudder at the thought, and shrink with horror from this pestilential ill, were they aware of the dreadful consequences they are very possibly  
 entailing

entailing on futurity: but finding in themselves no ill-intent on their departure from the established tenets, little do they think that their posterity will grown bolder and bolder in their desires, increasing exactly with their numbers, untill long used to full licence and grown sensible of their power, what was before to all appearance perfectly innocent desire, by certain future degrees becomes ostensible dictatorial demand; when meeting a strong bar to their wishes in a necessary direct check to such dangerous innovations and incroachments, these self-same harmless men who were before the most peaceable of the community, become disappointed, dissatisfied, disaffected, provoked, and ready moulded to the dark fashion of the daring desperado, or any boisterous ill-fated occasion that presents corresponding opportunity of desolating their native, their once beloved country in woeful carnage, horrible to the fancy; each imbruing their defiled sacrilegious hands in his nearest relation's blood—demon-like they glory in the dreadful slaughter, nor think they have done well till their full end of folly is thus ruefully obtained; even so, what was begun in meekness

ness and ignorance, and continued in heedless error, miserably ends in general ruin and devastation: too truly such is the foul war of religion; that aerial shadowy dissimilitude which has so often deluged the world; and as truly such is man when shielded with bigotry and armed with the desperate frenzy of enthusiasm.

It will not now be unnatural to bring forward in the landscape, a few dissenters from the church of England of every different sect, each surrounded with his own orderly family, with their bottles and glasses merrily filled upon their table, brim full of ease, enjoyment and happiness, with this treatise open before them, after having just finished reading the preceeding explanation of their present as well as that of their future state in society—select one of these of similar dispositions from each particular schism, and hear them all separately say, that this statement, as far as concerns his own sect, is neither just nor true, it is neither the portrait of himself or his family; sensible of his own apparently innocent, and to him laudable motives for an absolute dissent, brought up to his opinions from earliest infancy, he never before considered any such consequences

consequences as attendant on the sect to which he belongs, and can hardly admit them into his belief; for he can answer for his own good intentions, and sure, very sure, he is, that his children or grand children, are neither violent, disorderly, or given to turbulence; therefore actually impossible that they should ever contribute to convulse the land of their nativity, to which they are one and all in their own opinions the most zealous patriots.

Alas, poor men! how weakly, how directly are they mistaken, the fallibility of mortals is their twin brother, born with them into the world, and if uncontrouled, leaves them not the power of answering for themselves in any point that concerns futurity—circumstances grow luxuriantly wild with time that bear down all opposition, and bring to light unforeseen events that change their very nature, and rouse the lion in the breast of the lamb; therefore if a man trusts the security of his own and his posterity's welfare to particular inclinations and vain hopes, he strangely deceives himself, and with his breath resigns disquietude, enmity and unhappiness, as the portion of his successors.



But however nevertheless, this set of dispositions would be for the most part what they would seem, quiet, faithful, well-intentioned subjects, were they not so actually exposed to be misled and wrought upon by the insinuating misrepresentations of the more violent; and then when once wound up to stand forward, frequently in the end are found to be as inexorable in their errors, as the more hardy headstrong fomenters of discord.

Another set, similarly situated, but of different dispositions from the former, will say, this is an infamous base attempt to deprive them of their just rights of men to think and act as they please; that they should have an undoubted liberty of serving God and themselves in their own way; for none else is right or would lead them to Heaven; and therefore will each live and die in his own opinions, in his own faith, and maintain the authority of his sect, be the consequences what they may.

As to the rights of man, they as widely differ in themselves as the brute of the field to the reasoning faculty of the human soul; the more mankind are uncontrouled, the less fit are they  
for



for society. It is true in the abject state of perfect equality, they may be said to enjoy the rights of nature; but what is this common will, but the general privilege of doing service or injury as instinct chances to direct, free from either distressing remorse, or pleasing satisfaction of mind?—the rights of general society are then the only true desirable rights, to be coveted by all and distributed to all; to be maintained, protected and watched, equally against the inroads of the tyrant's despotic sway, as from the popular attraction of over-strained liberty; both which are alike, equally enemies to general impartial happiness and prosperity, the first and only true principle whereon to found the rights of a people.

Strictly upon this principle then,—arrogant and monstrously presuming is that man, who setting at defiance the whole community of the kingdom in which he lives, holds and dares to inculcate opinions and doctrines, whether of religion or otherwise, that may presently or ultimately prove materially injurious to the general mass of people; and actually such have been the original deviators from the established church of England, of what-

ever description, whether Quakers, Methodists, Anabaptists, Presbyterians, or any other sect of natural born subjects; however, although it is allowed they are now less blameable on this score, from customary licence and the attachment of an authorised education, yet this takes not one atom from the ill quality that appertains to their abstracted voice from the fixed order of that government, under which they voluntarily and wishfully continue to enjoy every desirable blessing: for certainly no position can be more decidedly clear, than that one and all should completely conform to the laws, customs, and requisite order of the country wherein they are settled.

In the present instance, the opinions and doctrines of every deviator, (who thus erroneously calls and believes himself a good and faithful subject) pointedly contribute more or less to this general injury, by creating rancorous division, when successful unity would otherwise happily and advantageously prevail; a division of such obvious distrust, and so serious in its act, that neither of the dissentient sects willingly intermarry the one with the other, nor either of  
 them

them chearfully with the established church; this is for the time being undoubtedly detaching, enmitizing, and weakening a community in very essential degree; more particularly so when their tenets run diametrically opposite to the common law and interest of the land, as many now do at the present hour; variously consisting in a non-compliance with necessary established customs; in a refusal of established oaths, excellently calculated for the direct purpose of extracting truth; in a like refusal to take up arms in defence of their country, at the same time adopting a distinguishing mark for their sect, by the most plain parsimonial apparel, habit and conduct, immediately disadvantageous to the general trade of the country, and very artfully calculated to increase their numbers by the one and their opulence by the other; in short the whole of these deviations form a glaring instance of the extreme folly of bigotry, the unblushing unreasonableness and audacity, injustice and inequity in the expectations of weak unthinking men: and looking further on the increase of these sects to any thing like that of a collective equality in number and power to that of  
the

the mother church, they absolutely become, as it were, a poisoned dagger striking at the vitals of their country—Can that man then who continues and maintains these prejudicial dangerous opinions, contentedly and conscientiously declare himself a faithful, honourable, and innocent member of the realm of England? if he does, he must be blind to the evidence of the senses, and flatly contradict every sound principle of equity and right reason; nor can he call to his acquittal, as he may be foolish enough to imagine, a superiority of Divine benefit accruing here or hereafter, either to himself or others, from his would-be superior opinion and dissenting voice—mistaken man! depend upon it, no axiom that can be laid down is so certain, as that, that religion which most encourages brotherly love to all, that contributes in the greater and most impartial degree to the perfect peace, unity and orderly conduct of a people, opening their understanding to the clear perception of present knowledge and future bliss, at the same time that it manifests, magnifies and glorifies the Almighty and most merciful Father of all things, animate and inanimate, will ever  
be

be most acceptable to that Divine Supreme; ever desirous and ever pleased with the success and prosperity of his lowly servants, and ever perfectly satisfied with the steadfast offering of prayer, from a truly sincere, benevolent, and penitential soul.

Even allowing then, for argument sake, that the tenets, doctrines and forms of each of the different dissenting sects to be, what they certainly are not, of equal good effect (considered in themselves singly without retrospect to any other) as the established church; yet taken as they ever must and ought to be in a retrospective view; instead of good, they one and all produce most immediately and decidedly, that of sowing the seeds of dissention and discord throughout a whole people; than which assuredly nothing can be more displeasing and unjust in the eyes of God and man—wherefore are they absolutely and positively left without one single applicable solid argument in their favour: all that remains for them to say is, that they are determined to shut out conviction from their sight, and to believe their private opinion (a tolerable vain one) to be equal or superior



perior in consequence to that of a whole nation, most profoundly weighed, deliberately considered and devoutly established upon every earthly and heavenly maxim of wisdom.

By which it will be perceived, that depriving men even from thinking and acting as they please, and worshipping God in every absurd way that might endlessly enter their imaginations; so far from infringing, is on the contrary requisitely maintaining the rights and benefits of mankind; when it will also immediately follow, that the aim and intent of these explanations are no longer to be upbraided with the epithets of base and unprincipled, but will rather merit those of commendable, beneficial and praise worthy.

Now again to return to the table with a third set from each sect, with face full of gravity but of little dispositions, prone to be guided and governed more by the minutiae, than by the enlarged and only material ground of principle and action.

These will exclaim, "What absurdity is this to write against our persuasions, without entering into our double refined reasons for supporting



porting a different form of worship from that of the established church—Lord! how much more pleasing are we in thy sight, who pray in silence or extempore; best knowing our own wants, than they who studying and thinking before they speak, deliver up their prayers and thanksgivings, most sublimely written, and fully calculated to comprize their every self particular necessity and desire, as well as those of all mankind.

How preferable must our clergy be too, who should all be orators, by the hobbyhorfical infusion of inspiration, than theirs who are only required to read.”

In answer to these exclamations, it must be observed, that these are very probably the identical ideas, by which they were poorly led to the interest of a set of deluding men, who having more than the common flow of words at pleasure, turned them with subtilty to their own advantage; their followers most weakly and strangely forgetting, that it is not in words alone that godliness, holiness, and the benefit of man consists, but in the substance of the thoughts expressed; which common sense and common

reason declares, must ever preponderate in favour of study and consideration.

Then another exclamation is heard saying, "How preferable are we in thine eyes, O Lord! who receive thy signal with such a blessed flap on the back by thy spirit, as to make us so quake, that the fear, trembling, and lowly submission of us, thy chosen servants, may be heard in Heaven, in right preference to the superior truth of our professions."

So weak in truth and so powerful in error, is the wrought-up fancy of mortals.

Strange indeed to be deluded away by the aid of this crafty statement of a principle, which the mother church equally, and so much more rationally enjoins; being neither more or less than a delusive manner of recommending a fervency and sincerity of heavenly devotion, warm from a heart impressed with a strong sense of that fear and love, so justly due towards the great merciful Redeemer of the world.

Then comes forth with serious lengthened face, the little enfeebled voice of the inferior formalists—what presumption, say they, for a church to expect salvation, that takes the sacrament

trament in the form of kneeling, standing or sitting, different from that of their particular sect!—what absurdity to use the reverend attire of the surplice!—what profanation to take the established oaths!—what wickedness to wear habiliments, to do, or to say any thing like those irreverend churchmen?—then, the chaunting forth the praises of God; whether from the hoarse voice of a parish clerk, or from the high-strained note of refined and charming melody, is so vastly ridiculous; besides a number of other little ceremonies, (as little even as those who so prejudicially object to them) are in our little eyes, such full-sized mountains, and huge monsters, that we can neither compass or dare even to look at—in short, these forms and ceremonies are all so immensely shocking, that we would not, no not for a thousand pounds, comply with one of them; nay, we had rather set the whole nation (though our native country) in a general flame and confusion, than to give up one tittle of our opinions; for such wicked forms as these would one and all be instant death, and send us down to the regions of darkness,

Well said, well done ye paragons of wisdom and virtue ; go on and may you all receive the great reward, the full desert of your religious patriotism, ye heroic martyrs of your country's welfare.

Next and lastly, though not least in wonders, is presented a select company of Heaven-born teachers—at a meal—men of fine capacious feelings of noble appetites, hungering after divine food and thirsting right well after holy beverage ; altogether forming an order of most exquisite compound, collected with super-excellent choice and admirable judgment from the smutty tinker to the tattered collegian ; men who will involuntarily draw forth your charity ; opening even the double knotted purse-strings of the miser, bounteously to relieve the wants of the poor and distressed of mankind—themselves out of the question—behold this select party surrounded with the full cloud of all radiant glory, qualified from the mouth of truth itself, vapour upon vapour ascending with powerful scent, so magically odoriferous, as well nigh to become the emblem of a nethermost hell ; and ye the followers after true righteousness, approach

proach with countenances of affrightful woe, and hear the doom of ten-fold vengeance passed upon your sinful parsimonious offering unto these reformers of the world.

Brethren and fellow labourers, though you cannot attend to the dull enlightened reasonable language of the mother church, you will be sure to comprehend and give us your full attention, because we are not able to speak unto you but after your own manner; and so we will at once tell you plainly, that you will every one of you certainly be damned to all eternity, if you do not believe most implicitly every word we say; therefore now in the first place you must all, without further ceremony, stand and deliver your money, or, by our Holy Power, we will go nigh to blow out your little brains with the thunder of our voices; nay verily the drums of your ears shall be so tremendously thumped even as our fist-worn cushions, until ye become so deaf and dead to all other sense of existence, that ye shall neither hear, see, nor think but of us; who having for the most part (being born of the flesh as ye also are) a numerous offspring, either naturals or non-naturals, with large  
starving,

starving, craving families, and having so bewildered our own senses, as to be incapable of getting an honest livelihood, by any proper legal means, and having rare robust lungs, a glib tongue, and a good constitution to bear the weather; we, no matter how, whether artfully, shamefully, wickedly, or otherwise, resolve to make you dupes to our necessities; by first drawing you from your regular orderly church devotion, through the means of our eccentric, uncommon, and therefore attractive discourses to you in the open fields, upon such subjects, and in such manner as we think will strike and wheedle you to our purpose, or into the humour of contributing to the hire of some barn-like place, that will afford a covering to our heads, in the exhibition of our wonderful talents; when so far succeeding with you, ye good, wise, worthy, charitable Christians; then it being clear unto us, that we have you fast in our clutches, we according to the tenor of our holy order so terrify your noodle pates, by the fury of our denunciations, made with extended arms, startled eyes, and horrible grimace, that ye, our meek, good-natured followers, know not scarcely

ly



ly whether your souls are your own : your hearts are so fully melted down that the essence runs out at your pockets, and leaves you most lamentable objects of contemptible pity ; but if otherwise you should harden your hearts against our preaching, we your furious directors, will presently show you the way to Hell, and so bring the terrible prospect to your sight, in the complete dreadful fiery picture of the infernal regions, accompanied with all the madning horrors of eternal damnation ; that we will very soon drive you to hopeless despair, and utter distraction ; and then do we, according to our right noble custom, inhumanly leave you without remorse on our parts, to wander in the dismal labyrinth of woeful and endless imbecility of mind, the summit of worldly misery.

After having thus for a while taken flight, in compliment to the strange extravagant absurdities, with which the substance of most these various deviations abound ; it will be well now to return to a proper serious mood of thinking ; but first observing, touching all these poor evasions and unaccountable methods by which much too considerable a part of the people of  
 England

England are drawn away from the regular established church; lest it should, as it probably will, by all and every of these non-conforming members be thought, that these grounds on which their dissention is built, have been herein much too lightly treated; it is particularly recommended, that they will place the whole of their identical visionary reasons, heaped up in wonderful pile, in one great scale, and in the opposite one, the present and future ill consequences that do, and may attend them; then when duly weighed, in perfect candour it must appear to them and all the world, that these long-used dissenting opinions in general, are absolutely light as air, and actually too ludicrous in themselves to be treated in any other more serious stile—and if men will not be reasoned out of their prejudices, when they prove positively detrimental to society and their country; it is excusable and even right, to endeavour, either by ridicule or otherwise, to shame them into such as are not only innocent, but as beneficial to themselves as to the whole community.

So far concerning those, whose (to use the most applicable word) whose dislikes of the forms and service of the church, or as frequently whose antipathy merely to the clergymen officiating at their parish, most weakly, and still more thoughtlessly, lead them to follow so prejudicially other strange inferior sects, composed and made up of the strangest fanaticism;—

Now then a word to those who cavil only at the ceremony of the national establishment, but still usefully adhere to its doctrines.

First then consider the great and wonderful variety of nature, that out of the millions of people who on earth do dwell, no two faces and countenances can possibly be selected, bearing an exact and perfect resemblance; and just so it will ever be found with the mind also; any system or model whatsoever, however nearly arriving at the summit of wordly perfection, will notwithstanding meet the absolute disapprobation of some; proceeding not from the least defect in the symmetry and formation of its several parts, but entirely from the defective capacities of those who thus ignorantly disap-

prove; therefore, endless would be an attention to constant, frivolous, trifling complaints and objections, that will ever in themselves be absolutely endless:—even such, and so frivolous are much the greater part of those against the present form of worship of the church of England —As to instance,—Many will object to the frequent, and in their opinions tautological repetitions of that sublime composition, the Lord's prayer, as now used in the public service.

Of these it may be well to ask, if their attention is not frequently, at different times during the service, perfectly absent or occupied by other subjects of thought; and likewise whether they are not as frequently, more disposed in their attention, to feel the full force of this or any other prayer, more sensibly, and more religiously at one time than at another?—the answer to both these questions, of course being--yes--of course also must it be, that was this prayer only said once or twice, it would frequently happen at this time of their absence or insensibility of mind; by which they would be injuriously deprived of the excellent fervent good effect of one of the most generally useful prayers that it is possible to construct—yet some may still say,  
why

why should we be detained for the neglect of others? to them it must be answered, that this service not being formed for their own private benefit, they become unworthy of the name of Christians, if by such short detention they are averse to contribute to the general good—a poor mite indeed to deny.

There are even to be found, some who object to the delivery and performance of the different services of litany, communion, &c. in one continued succession, as at present used, divided only by psalms or otherwise, upon the score of inconsistency, and making the service too long—

One would not readily suppose any such opinions would be publicly mentioned, (whatever might be private sentiment) by any man or body of men; yet are such actually to be found formally stated in elaborate queries and surmises, (with others infinitely too numerous, and mostly too futile to deserve attention) pompously, and was the matter more worthy, not improperly, addressed to the governing powers in church and state; but more immediately directed to the two houses of convocation—indeed the subject now in discussion is so sha-

dowy and visionary, as to need a full rounded magnifier to discover any thing like substance, whereon even a doubt could be founded, but that these (as they are called) different services, jointly comprising no more than the whole of our wants, desires, supplications, offerings of praise and thanksgiving, with the requisite belief of the divine attributes, collectively forming one grand service, will ever be more acceptable to God, and serviceable to man, than the short partial, slight ejaculation of each or either of these, seperated to seperate hours of the day—

Surely those most pleased with difficulties of their own creating, and most prone to excite changes in every system and circumstance of life, would never have of themselves found out or thought of this seperation, had the whole service been distinguished under one and the same title; but as they may formerly have been so divided, and now continue still to be called by the different distinctions of name, though altogether making up only one necessary complete moderate service; yet the appearance that these different appellations alone carry with them, is ground of argument sufficient for  
these



these consistent gentlemen to distribute to the public, their ideas of the inconsistency of the established service of the church of England, which as apparent as it may seem to them, exists no where in reality, but in their own imaginations.

As to the length of time taken up in going completely through every part of this service, it will be found upon investigation, instead of being hurtful, to be not only serviceable, but requisite to the furthering, with permanent effect, the true cause of religion—it certainly speaks for itself, that the mind of man seldom, if ever, can on the very instant become settled to that serious thoughtfulness suitable to the solemn occasion of addressing the Almighty; having just before, probably, been trifling with levity, and laughing at reflection; it takes time to put off this natural careless mirth and gaiety, and enter with deliberation into that fervency and steadiness of devotion, which alone leaves the retentive impression productive of the most essential and lasting good; and as to the consideration of the health of individuals during the severity of the season, this is not to be remedied by rendering the service short, passing swiftly  
from

from the remembrance, and defective, but by introducing the obvious antidote of stoves, or any other suitable invention that will effectually afford the proper warmth; and thus to do away at once the evil complained of.

The articles and creeds too, are further obstacles that require alterations in the judgment of those, who think they have judgment; but this too great confidence being the rock on which all are so often apt to split, it may be prudent to close the whole of these nice, deep-searched fine-spun objections, and to proceed to other more obvious considerations.

In order however to prevent the possibility of a mistake on a point that nearly concerns the various sects of dissenters of every description, it may be proper to observe, that notwithstanding what has been hinted on the score of danger to the church, from too great an increase of their collective power, it must not be understood that any such fatal consequences as this might and would occasion, are now to be dreaded from the present state of both parties, (for so they may be called); the national establishment bearing as it is hoped it ever will, that well  
known

known high superiority, as to do away every such idea in the most decided manner, with the intelligent; but least the most distant thought or supposition of this nature, should become even a conjecture among those who are less acquainted with the actual state of their schismatics, this explanation is particularly recommended to their attention; that an error so immediately injurious to themselves may not secretly or publicly go forth, causing further requisitions and stronger animosities, as highly destructive of their common interests, as dangerous to their present and future well being.

Notwithstanding this happy security under which we now enjoy such a pleasing prospect of religious tranquillity, such is the noble beautiful nature of the government of the kingdom of Great Britain, that with high and lofty liberality it considers its subjects of every class and denomination (as the good father doth his children) without shewing an unjust preference to either; with much disinclination forcing itself to restrain the untoward and headstrong, and even granting to all, more liberty of action, in every sphere, than may perhaps be perfectly  
consistent

consistent with its own proper advantage and safety ; in so much that it is greatly to be feared the too generous prevailing spirit of general toleration, notwithstanding the present mild appearance of circumstances, will be productive of much future mischief ; indeed to state it in its true light, it is neither more nor less than absolutely weakening the great foundation stone of the constitution, and deviating from the grand and soundest principle of our political rectitude, founded for the wisest direct purpose of consolidating the mass of people into one powerful harmonious friendly compact, which in every view is the true means of promoting that desirable unity, happiness, and prosperity, alike beneficial to government and its subjects in general.

It will very ill become the wisdom of our government therefore, to be lulled into incautious indolence or inattention by this seeming security of an ascendant superiority in the church, of which they cannot be too mindful, from the close connection it bears to the state ; the fall of the one, must be the fall of the other ; at once opening the door to the most complete and fatal confusion,

confusion in every department and circumstance of life ; and whatever may be the public opinion of the memorable acts passed in favour of the Roman Catholics upon the broad principle of reciprocity and liberality, it was absolutely and directly breaking through one of those great essential lines, upon which the firmness and strength of our constitution very materially depends ; and it was so far injurious (as will assuredly too plainly be seen) that it was immediately strewing the way with thorns, in a precedent for the endless applications and demands of every non-conforming sect ; which no sooner obtained than so much the sooner renewed, and accordingly by as much the greater becomes the disappointment, or by so much the forwarder comes on either the obstinate determined resolution of obtaining the end required, or otherwise of seceding with inveterate secret enmity and rooted disgust, ready to break forth upon the slightest occasions.

It is readily allowed to be extremely difficult to remedy an evil which has taken such deep root ; what is called liberty of conscience has

M

been



been long granted in too unconfined a degree to be suddenly or easily counteracted; but when state necessity, which is no other than that of the people, is fully comprehended and becomes an obvious consequence; every endeavour should be exerted on the part of government, and every acquiescence on the part of the different sectaries cordially and cheerfully manifested, in order to return to the lost path of ancient experience and constitutional security, and firmly to amend the breach already commenced on this high consequential point of national safety; therefore would every non-conformist do well to consider that though he might find it a task too severe, (merely from the prejudice of education) to depart from a long-used accustomed form of religion, and might perhaps fancy himself (for it would be but fancy) highly aggrieved, was he forced into a strict compliance with the ordinances of the church of England, even though by such submission he would thereby be materially serving his country, himself, and the public; yet would he do nobly well to consider, that his children would be in no shape whatever injured, not even on this  
fancied

fancied score of prejudice and supposition, but would on the contrary, be highly benefited by rearing them in the worship of the church, as established for the immediate welfare of the kingdom; it is therefore recommended in the strongest manner to their candour and good sense, to pay such attention to this point as may be productive of the most desirable coalition and association of the general interests of the county at large, and happily conduce to that perfect concord and union, that would so honourably prove a renowned and glorious example of their attachment and regard to the true interests of their posterity, and an illustrious ever memorable monument of their fidelity, patriotism, and support of this established excellent constitution, both in church and state.

To expect this advice however to be circumstantially followed, would be expecting more than an extended survey of the general occurrences in the life of man will authorize; unless some particular inducement, more immediately applicable to the prejudices be held forth, than patriotism, brotherly love, or distant advantage; in order therefore to break the way for to de-

firable an accomodation, it must first be observed, that the huge monster so shockingly terrific to them, is neither more nor less than an airy unsubstantial vision ; for whatever of defect there may seem in the church form of worship, that now appears so insurmountable in the eyes of every non-conformist, it is positively and absolutely not the defect of the establishment, but solely and wholly the defect of the pusillanimity and degeneracy of mankind :—

Neither Presbyterian, Anabaptist, Quaker, or Methodist are any where to be found, leading a life so truly virtuous, righteous, and religious as that which is so strongly enjoined and ordered by the church of England, therefore if any man wishes to be more devout than his neighbours, he does highly wrong to fly to a different form of religion for that purpose ; because he has only to fulfil, moderately, the ordinances, the articles, and the tenets of the mother church, and he will instantly become a perfect pointed renowned model of Christianity.

And it is again repeated, that if the churchmen do not seem sufficiently orderly and religious, it is actually not the fault of the church system,

system, which is in itself most strictly devout, but that of its followers ; a fault rooted in the nature of man, proceeding partly from the degeneracy of the times, and perhaps partly from the remissness of the appointed regulators : let not each or either of the dissenting sects, however, imagine any advantage to their cause in point of argument in the least to arise from this remissness, if such there be ; for the nature of man is intrinsically and exactly alike, of what religion or form of worship soever ; and this remissness therefore would accordingly be identically the same, was either the one or the other to reign triumphant in national sovereignty :—

The difference in all inferior deviating orders, being that of necessarily working their way by an outward seeming over-righteousness, without which it would be utterly impossible to carry on, attract, or maintain, a thus deceptive party influence—the very same rule holds good in point, in every great system whatever and wheresoever, that is purposed to be undermined by the lesser—a more than the common degree of industry, craft, watchfulness, art, diligence, and seeming good, are the only means that  
affor<sup>t</sup>

afford the chance of thus attaining the proposed end.

Now then was it possible for each of the non-conforming parties sufficiently to divest themselves of these their prejudicial prejudices, so as mostly to educate their children in the direct worship of the church of England, as every true-born faithful British subject ought to do; it might probably be an inducement to the Legislature (as a reciprocal inducement to them) to take into its consideration, any ground of sound policy and substantial benefit that they might be able with due submission to point out, for the revising and correcting any particular obnoxious article or tenet in the present established form, so as to render it more congenial to the temper and dispositions of a considerable set of men, who are no otherwise inimical to the welfare of Great Britain, than in this deviation and opposition to the fixed order of the state.

In these their references however the dissentients should be moderate, and not expect impossibilities; the points of accommodation should be extremely few, and well founded; for the church system, like a great consequential fabric, constructed



structed on a plain maffy order of architecture, certainly may be rendered more directly useful and pleafurable to look upon, by partaking of the correfponding ornamental improvements of an improved age, provided they be made with requifite caution and approved judgment; but fhould the foundation of this weighty pile, either through negligence or rafhnefs, or through a deficiency in forefight or fkill, be accidentally undermined, it then with fearful and wonderous havoc, becomes one tremendous heap of confufed ruins, deftroying at once in its fall, the unskilled artift and ignorant workman, who thus ruefully and blindly become the immediate inftrument of their own downfall and deftruction.

If fuch then fhould ever be the conduct of the non-conformifts, it will be a duty incumbent on the governing powers in church and ftate, to pay that attention to their feveral proffered opinions and requifitions, referred to their judgment with all that due refpect and deliberate calm refignation of tone, which the importance of the object and the high responsive fituation of the great and leading councils of the legiflature muft ever claim and maintain; nor is there the leaft  
doubt

doubt but that every such statement, made on proper well-informed grounds, and thus properly referred, would, (as indeed it ever ought) meet with a satisfactory, considerate investigation, proportionate to the nature, truth, and importance of the subjects so presented for consideration; and as much of solid good, as they might in part, or in the whole contain, would be most assuredly placed to the advantage of the public account.

But such a measure, though it would undoubtedly be a glorious epoch in the annals of this country, that would highly redound to the honour, candour, welfare, and fame of every non-conformist; yet notwithstanding this, it confessedly cannot be looked up to with any degree of confidence or well-formed expectation.

Therefore, what further remains for commentary discussion, is the mode of effectually counteracting and guarding against the consequences of an evil; that is not very likely thus to be remedied.

The liberal plan on which the legislature of this country has long proceeded in these matters, has hitherto been that of a generous, but  
dangerous

dangerous system, merely timely and palliatory; wishing to please all, and to offend none, soothingly and ineffectually endeavouring to keep the power of the non-conformists simply at a stand; allowing them at the same time every latitude and confidence that could well be required, in order to keep them in humour, and attach them firmly to the interest of government; but alas, this is only encouraging, nay nursing, and not counteracting the evil; it is in effect, the direct similitude of suffering a thoughtless infant, perfectly giddy with its unusual liberty, to dance and play at the extreme edge of a tremendous precipice; or as the same wayward child, left by a foolish indulgent mother, hungry and alone in her garden, within the reach of delicious fruit that would tempt an Anchorite, whereof, being thus led into temptation, it would of course immoderately eat to the immediate ruin of its own health, and then innocently spoil what remained, to the sorrow, loss, and self-blame of the fond unthinking parent:—in short, for government to proceed in this indecisive, inattentive, or too indulgent manner, will be prepar-

ing a rod for themselves, wherewith to be perpetually scourged; at once encouraging the dissenting sects of every denomination, one and all, (who are already become a very considerable collective body) to be higher and higher in their demands, until exceeding the bounds of all moderation—government will be under the necessity of doing that at last with difficulty, which they might before have done without the least apprehension; and as prevention is undoubtedly preferable to cure, and as it can never be an approved maxim, barely to keep an evil so liable to break forth upon a fine hair breadth balance, the direct and only opposite stimulative to this prevention, must be quite the contrary of that which is used; instead of allowing greater latitude in religion, it is necessary even now, or depend upon it it will henceforward be found more so, so to confine, clog, and load, one and all of these visionary wayward opiated injurious dissenting parties, as to occasion a natural consequent decrease, which though it might not be rapid, should be regularly gradual and absolutely certain; (so strange it is, but no less true, that

men

men must frequently even be thus almost imperceptibly forced against their inclinations into their own advantage)—but to render such a measure truly permanent and serviceable, it would at the same time be necessary to rouse the lethargic carelessness and discipline of the church clergy in common, and particularly to cause an attentive observance of duty in the higher offices, appointed with high salaries, for the most essential and beneficial purpose, of watching over the conduct of the inferiors in every line of view, in order to prevent neglect, impropriety, and irreverence of every kind, in the parish and village pastors.

One circumstance that frequently occurs is particularly blameable in some of the clergy of the church of England; which is that of alluding with satire and severity in public service, through peak, envy, malice, or any uncharitableness whatever, pointedly to any individual person; conduct like this (of which there are many instances that go unpunished) is the highest, most arrogant presumption, that men, whose direct duty it is to keep peace and order in the place of worship, and to be an example of

moderation and impartiality, can possibly be guilty of—in its consequence, instead of inspiring piety and godliness, it cannot but rouse the indignation of the thinking part of their auditors; and as to the person alluded to (if present) when the reverential order of the church is thus broken in upon by one of its own appointed servants, it would by no means be blameable, in the light of generally stopping the mal-ignominious practice, to take every such fellow (for he then becomes unworthy of any other name) by the collar, and at once hurl him from his pulpited throne of thus corrupted security, and cast him out from the church, even as a minister of hell, as one, highly unworthy of the reverend seat and gown he wears; as one, who sets at defiance the authority of his superiors; as one, who counteracts every good purpose of his profession, and turns it into evil; as one, who thus assumingly, impertinently, profanely, and unpardonably disturbs, and publicly makes war upon the peace and harmony of society.

To these and all other circumstances, lessening the dignity and reverence of the church,  
the



the bishops, absolutely delegated and paid for this only purpose, should attend with the most assiduous strict observation, and instantly strip these defaulters of their holy garb; without this active spirit of regulation, reformation can neither be had nor expected; with it, a consequent salutary return of many of its departed votaries; and it is the more immediately requisite at a time like this, when there is such an evident inclination kept afloat by the more industrious self-serving pastors of the various non-conformists, to desert from the too secure and indolent standard of the church, to their delusive, strange, and therefore attractive doctrines—likewise should both bishops and magistrates, jointly and equally, with birch in hand, as particularly attend to the Jobs, Daniels, and Solomons of the field, who under the cloak of extraordinary religion, are at the very instant doing the utmost in their power to disjoint the kingdom, and are actually then sowing the seeds of future destructive religious discord, by seducing the too easy credulous multitude from the established form of worship; and this solely with the private view of trumpeting forth  
a fame

a fame of oratorical roaring, that soon begets them a tabernacle of ignorants, and fills their pockets at the expence of the general injury.

Indeed it is possible there may be some few, who may look upon the Methodist preachers, as working a licenced under-part of the national establishment, (or in the vulgar corresponding phrase, doing the dirty work,) by a particular directed attention to instill and thunder devotion into the lower order of the people; but this would be a most fatal error to substantiate, by gradually occasioning a total division that would be very sadly experienced by posterity; and the church is so fully equal, and has within itself that varied latitude in its lessons of piety, so completely adapted to every understanding, however poor and unlettered, that it needs only the proper attention and suitable application of them, to work the desired heavenly purpose with the most ample effect; it would therefore be weak and unpardonable not to exert and retain in the most enlarged sense, and with the most scrupulous exactness, all its functions and all its votaries.

Further

Further likewise observe, that in direct contradiction to past and present practice, formed upon a fallacious and too confident contempt, the attention should not be merely confined to the sects that have already from this cause taken too deep a root ; but every dissonant new doctrine of whatever nature, wherever, and by whomsoever started, should experience the most decided, effectual, and instant check.

For this purpose, every man who has discovered, or fancies that he has discovered any new doctrine, that he may think, believe or hope, (from whatever motive no matter) may be introduced as the offspring of his bright, opinionated, or fanatical brain, should under the severest penalty (than which none can exceed the ill consequence of non-observance) be strictly bound and obligated to submit the subject matter to the mature deliberate consideration of the bishops and ruling powers of the church, in the first instance ; when, should it contain ought of good, whatever that good may be, should certainly be incorporated into the national establishment, and the author duly rewarded for his meritorious service ; but as will  
more

more generally happen, should it contain no solid permanent immediate or distant improvement, the proposal should be returned with all that liberal urbanity that should ever mark the wisdom of their impartial councils, by thus far taking the will for the deed, in the laudability of a good, though fruitless intention, of rendering service to God and man :—

But after the publishing this essential decree, most positively forbidding the preaching or making public, by any means whatsoever, any opinions, doctrines, or even suppositions, contrary in substance or effect from the identicals of the mother church, without first being submitted as before mentioned, and without every tittle of such new doctrine, opinion, or supposition being fully, clearly, and knowingly authorized and recommended by these guardian powers ; then after this, should any man, (let him be whom he may, whether high or low, obscure or celebrated) presume to deliver, print, or write, with the intent of secretly or openly propagating such improper doctrines, opinions, or suppositions, which have either not been presented at all, or have been previously so dis-  
approved ;

approved; every such person becomes instantly a public defaulter, a daring disobedient sacrilegious culprit of the most injurious cast; and should be treated with that severity of fine; imprisonment; or bodily punishment, (which should be steadfastly and unremittingly inflicted) according in perfect justice to the state of the offence and (in point of fine) of the offender.

Now having endeavoured to point out the impropriety and bad tendency of the many different contending religious interests, that so materially foment unfortunate animosities, that already form divisions of the people so highly injurious to the state, and that may hereafter, if not timely counteracted, more sadly disturb the harmonious peace and quiet of the kingdom of Great Britain; and having recommended to the appointed magistracy; and particularly to the established church; a more strict attention to her interests, and at the same time to hold out and offer, a moderate cautious revision throughout its several parts, as an equivalent inducement to the various dissenting parties, to unite in the great purpose of consoli-



dating the people into one compact general powerful mass, of most desirable unity; or otherwise, on failure of its acceptance, to proceed by such a regular sure train of well-laid policy, that will not fail in the end to obtain and accomplish with ease and safety to the nation, the great object aimed at—there still remains, yet to call for the assistance of government to this measure, which may at first perhaps startle, but should not seriously alarm them; the task may indeed carry trouble upon the face of it, but the superior existing power of the church, the present well disposed state of the kingdom, the perfect conspicuous advantage of the purpose, with the well-known attachment of the people to the present government, must do away every idea of danger or confusion from their concurrence in an attainment so important and devoutly to be wished for.

First then, respecting the attention of the Bishops and Magistrates, it would be highly advisable in government, where it is so evidently wanting, to supply the glaring deficiency that so injuriously manifests itself in their supineness of most perfect indifference, and in their

continued



continued negligent usage of unwarrantable permission, of any, and every absurd doctrine, old and new, that is now every where propagated, without the least obstruction, notwithstanding that it so strikingly affects the future well-being of both church and state; all these points that have been so particularly herein before recommended to them, may nevertheless require the enforcing hand of government, as an effectual spur to their industry and observance, highly requisite to the total salutary prevention of all these detrimental encroachments upon the established religion of the country.

Every government of every kingdom, to be serviceable to the people, should be an effective government; and the only means of rendering them so, is, beyond a doubt, to place so much responsible authority and power in their hands, as fully to enable them to carry through, without fear, delay or apprehension, any measure whatsoever that may be stamped with an unerring conviction of equity, truth, justice, and public advantage; and by as much as any government falls short of this power, by just so

much are they over-restrained, to the loss and injury of the community at large; yet notwithstanding this self-evident position, such has been the continued custom of systematic opposition in this country, that it has to all appearance degenerated into a fixed circumstance of necessary order; so much so, that men who violently oppose the measures of government, even in places that should be sacred to the welfare of the kingdom, frequently much less consider the subject matter of their discussion, than the persons and party who propose them; notwithstanding which, however evident and indubitably clear this may be, because merely they have it to say, such was and such is our opinion, in direct contradiction to the evidence of the senses; instead of the opprobrium that should ever attend such conduct, striking deadly at the very root of our every blessing, they shew their faces as unconcernedly, and are seemingly considered by the thoughtless people with the same appearance of grace and good humour, as if they had acted their parts, according to the true order of the constitution, according to the dictates of right reason, and according to the impulse

pulse of a conscientious justness of understanding; and this indeed is now become so habitual, that perhaps to say, that men should confine their attention in all public questions and debates wholly and entirely to the subject matter and its consequences only, without once adverting to the party or person from whom the proposition might originate, will not pass without its consequent expected share of ridicule: but however this may be, it is nevertheless a fundamental, though an obsolete and forgotten truth.

Men in general now form themselves into parties, and most absurdly consider it dishonourable to deviate from their given line of opinion; being once entered and adopted, each looks upon his voice and interest as due in honour (very poor honour) to its support, be their purposes what they may; thus absolutely making such their party, or if you please, themselves, the grand and primary motive of thought and action, and poor old England only the secondary, solemn, and last object of their renowned and illustrious councils——Is this just?—is this constitutional?—is this honourable?

able?—is this wise?—is it fulfilling a bounden duty?—is this to the advantage of Great Britain?—or rather is not this an endeavour to cramp, fetter, retard and clog unconstitutionally (because upon unconstitutional principles) the measures of government, whether good or bad, and the very direct means of damping their ardour in every noble and salutary pursuit, how beneficial soever?—O ye Judges, Sages, and Elders of the people! pronounce and say.

However, notwithstanding that the administration of this country frequently experience the greatest difficulty in carrying through any great extensive new proposition, more especially such as tend to confine the people beyond the line to which they have lately been accustomed; yet the point in question is so evidently the cause of the community at large, and so nearly concerns the interest of opposition, as well as that of government, that it is not doubted but the high superior attraction of religious benefit, will draw all equally to one united favourable sentiment, and to one agreeing general conclusion.

Let

Let not opposition, however, take what has just been written so personally to themselves, as on that account, to occasion a resentment against the measure herein before recommended (equally to them as to government); for they may rest perfectly and confidently assured, that it has proceeded from no partial personal antipathy of the most distant nature, but scrupulously from a complete and thorough conviction, that these accustomed predetermined systematic parties, that have so long subsisted in this kingdom as now almost to become an habitual matter of course, must as long as continued, constantly impede and protract every negotiation of the public business, even to the indiction and retardment of republicanism, and ever prove an essential, nay even an alarming injury to the whole nation———on the other hand it is no less strenuously advanced than it is firmly believed, that such is the noble spirit of the people in general, both of Great Britain and Ireland, that whenever they may experience sufficient and actual cause of exception and complaint against their ruling powers, (which it is confidently presumed



med and hoped to be far, very far distant) they will most assuredly, beyond the smallest doubt; on the instant, ever be found as ready as the most hardy son of Britain could wish, to stand boldly forward in the support and maintenance of their just and constitutional rights; privileges and advantages:

But now to return again more pointedly to the great cause of the established church of England, from which the several just preceding reflections, though not entirely unconnected with the issue, have rather drawn the subject; there remains, however, but little further to add, than merely the stating one or two objections—which are the most likely to be started in opposition to this very beneficial system of establishing one, and only one religion, as the direct national worship of the natives throughout one entire dominion; and consequently of preventing any and every individual from running unwarily into, and pursuing the most prejudicial and endless excessencies of an unfixed imagination, to which there is no preposterous chimerical fantasy, that their unconfined enthusiasm might not lead the greater part of  
a people”



a people, so easily deluded as the commonality of this, or indeed any other country.

The first and leading champion, then, of religious liberty, may very readily be supposed to exclaim, "That religion should ever be open to the improvement of heavenly inspiration;" consequently thus to confine it to one fixed order, would be, in effect, to shut out the light of Heaven, causing us for ever to be chained to one dark line of polluted ignorance.

To all those who may hold such unfavourable opinions of the confinement that is herein recommended, let them but look back to these particular points, and they will there find that all further ceremonies, devices, or doctrines whatever, that may at any time occur to particular individuals, (whether perchance, deep thought or inspiration, no matter,) and that may be judged to render unerring, absolute, consistent service to the great cause of religion, are there most pointedly and strenuously purposed to be introduced into the national establishment; when they will immediately perceive, that the only identical difference from this their objecting inclination, is actually no other

than this; that they would suffer the biased opinion of the single incoherent individual projector to stand in competition with a national council, composed of the first-rate abilities, on the nice critical point of passing that very difficult judgment which is so highly important, concerning the propriety, rectitude, consequences, and general benefit, of all such desired innovating introductions; whereas, on the contrary, the confinement here intended, so much more properly refers every such consideration to the impartiality of such evident superiority of council;—therefore it follows too plainly to need further argument, that so far from shutting out the inspiring light of Heaven, it is the foul vapoured lightening only, that so quickly blasts the sight of poor weak defenceless mortals, that with the Divine Providence would be safely conducted to some bare spot of earth, there to be harmlessly exhausted to the joy and relief of mankind, without so much as leaving to the view one shattered remnant of its avengeful destructive power.

The next objection may be that of a supposed injustice to the different dissenting sects that have been, and are now established.

To

To have been in error, and to be in error, is a poor argument for continuing in error--this error, too, has not till lately become so conspicuous:—it must further be said, that the general good, which equally too includes them in the general mass, must ever be first considered; then afterwards, and not till then, follows that of all these particular classes alluded to; but when the latter stands in direct competition with the former, as in the present case, there can be no admission whatever of a contending nature on the question at issue; and thus the objection vanishes at once into air—for what they partially call injustice, is neither more nor less than the noble uncontaminated voice of national Justice herself, enrobed in the purest array of truth, equity and wisdom.

A third objection may be started by the obstinate and violent, declaring there is no religion but that of their own particular sect, that will satisfy their fine feelings and scrupulous consciences; and therefore if such a measure was to be carried into execution, they, their families, nay, their whole fraternity would positively emigrate to some more goodly land, where

they might enjoy religious liberty in its full scope.

But what inconsiderates are these, and how few of them?—let them but ask this conscience of theirs the direct question, wherein the injury, the injustice, the inequity of this subject consists; and if it be not an ugly, inveterate, swelled conscience, of a most enormous size, it will instantly point out to them that it is only to be found in their own thoughtlessness and unconscioufness of expectation; such even as will soon so stare them in the face as to put them entirely out of countenance, when they come closely to consider the matter in discussion—for this purpose it must be reduced to a clear decisive point, amounting exactly to this—whether a whole nation so great and powerful as this, is to stoop and bow down in humble worship to their fine feelings and scrupulous consciences; or that their fine feelings and scrupulous consciences are to submit and give place to the customs, laws, establishments and welfare of their bounteous, too generous, and mighty country—or should they prefer this statement, it is equally applicable; whether they will have the assurance and hardiness to set up  
their

their narrow partial notions of right and wrong, in any matter or circumstance, of either life or futurity, in opposition to the collective wisdom of this enlightened country?—the instant answer to these obvious questions would be decisively—no—they only needed conviction to shew that they possessed the soul of Britons, ever, (when thus become clearly sensible of their mistake) more ready in, and receiving more satisfaction from the noble and generous acknowledgment of their errors, than they could ever otherwise have enjoyed from the obstinate, ill-founded, untimely, and injurious support of them.

But should, however, one more obdurate than the rest still pretend to hold his purpose as good, and set himself up as the dictatory god of a whole people: away with him!—for he must then be regarded, as one infected with a raging hydrophobia of enthusiasm; whose venom contaminates whatever it inwardly touches; as one totally unworthy of the bread that flows from a land so much his contrast in liberality, and so bounteous in all the luxuriant gifts of nature.

At



At last, however, before the final departure, reflection, in spite of his incorrigibility, will steal upon his senses, and cause him to consider with himself; where can he go, to what quarter, to what spot of the world can he fly, where he can enjoy that temperature of climate, that fruitful plenteous production of soil that now so amply recompences his toil and industry; that right of trading to every quarter of the globe; that opportunity of getting forward and enriching himself and his family; where will he find that honest frankness of address, hospitable liberality and sincerity in friendship; where the necessaries, conveniences, and luxuries of life in such abundance; and where an equal mildness, equity, and security of government that are to be compared to these he so amply experiences in this, his native country?

Alas! far may he go, and long may he seek, ere he finds an appearance of similarity; and when supposed to be found, a short trial would very soon prove the fallacy of such a scheme at the same time that it would so manifest to him his own egregious folly, that he would assuredly rejoice in the first opportunity of re-  
deeming



deeming his then evident error, by a speedy return to the embraces of his kindred and friends, in this much to be envied realm of blessed peace and plenty.

From emigration, then, nothing of such consequence is to be apprehended, as in the least to sway the judgment against this measure, fraught with consequences too high to be affected by the dread of such feather-like threatenings, from those few who might for a time be thus violently adventurous.

Next and lastly comes forward an objection more material than all the rest—which is—the difficulty in carrying through all the branches of the legislature, a measure that might seem on a superficial view, to hold out an appearance of rather constraining the happy enviable liberty of our glorious constitution.

Far, very far from such intent be this work—no—that inestimable jewel—Liberty without licentiousness—which so nobly characterizes this country, would receive no shock, no check, no infringement whatever from the full execution of the purposes herein proposed—laws must be made, and laws must be obeyed—what

law

law then can be so desirable, as that which tends to unite one people in one great powerful band of peaceable harmonious concord and amity? while it confines the mind of man to such enviable points as these, it neither controuls nor constrains any individual, beyond that which is necessary for the salutary preservation and good of himself, his family, and his posterity; it is in effect, impartially and generally leading the blind with the soft filken cord of mild religion, in the downy velveted path of social virtue, friendly compact, and moral rectitude; without which they would be sure to lose their way among rocks and quicksands, and become the prey of the loquacious and rapacious beings, that are ever ready to lead thus defenceless man to their haunts of error, wherein are rearing with anxious assiduity, fell discord, ill will, and enmity; until being full grown in shape and strength, the jarring fiends break their bantling chains, and in one body of fearful dismay, armed at every point with enthusiastic rage, come forth into light, the terror of the land.

While

While, therefore, any kingdom holds within itself the full power of preventing the most distant prospect of religious disagreement and disturbances, the sure prognostics to the horrors of religious war; which, however superficial the cause of difference, is always the most bloody and desolating of all grounds of contest whatever; it is the height of impolicy not to exert that power in its fullest extent, to the general preservation of mankind, and to the general good of the High and Holy cause of religion itself.

THE END.





